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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3207  
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

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DEPT FOR D, AF/FO, AF/SPG, AND AF/RSA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/12/2016

TAGS: PGOV PREL MARR US ER SU

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH YASSIR ARMAN ON EASTERN SUDAN,  
DARFUR, AND RELATIONS WITH ERITREA

Classified By: CDA Cameron Hume, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Charge Hume met with SPLM parliamentary leader Yassir Arman on June 13. Arman was hurrying to the airport to fly to Asmara for the opening of the Eritrean-sponsored talks on eastern Sudan. He expected the opening round to last for perhaps a week. The Sudanese delegation included former FM Mustafa Osman Ismail, Minister of Investment Malik Agar, U/S Mutriff Saddiq from the MFA, and Arman. As worked out with the Eritreans, the opening meetings would aim to let the government state what it could do and the opposition leaders state their demands. The government wanted to operate within the framework of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, but it was open to suggestions. For example, President Bashir had already approved offering a significant number of positions in the armed forces to the rebels, who unlike Darfurians were under-represented in the military.

¶2. (C) Arman said that the Eritrean hosts were not asking for outside support for the talks. They would host the rebels, and the government would pay for its own delegation. The idea was to keep the talks simple and straightforward, without large numbers of international observers. In response to Arman's question, Hume said that Ambassador Yates would represent the USG. Arman said that the Sudanese delegation would like to stay in close contact with Yates.

¶3. (C) Hume asked how Arman judged the efforts to secure the support of the SLM's Abdel Wahid and JEM's Khalil Ibrahim for the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). He related how he had been in touch with Abdel Wahid to arrange a meeting for him with Salva Kiir. Twenty times Abdel Wahid agreed to a date and venue; twenty times he canceled. Abdel Wahid was both difficult and unreliable. Hume concurred, but cautioned that without Abdel Wahid, there was no easy way to secure Fur support for the DPA in the short term. Arman said that no changes should be made to the text of the DPA, but the government could address Abdel Wahid's concerns in other ways, if he became a more reliable interlocutor. Arman saw less merit in seeking support of Khalil Ibrahim.

¶4. (C) In contrast, Arman said that Salva Kiir had a good meeting with Minni Minawi. Kiir urged Minawi to come soon to Khartoum to set up a base of operations; together the SPLM and SLM could work to moderate the policies of the NCP in the government.

¶5. (C) Regarding Sudanese relations with Eritrea, the visit this week of President Isaias to Khartoum had gone well. The situation in Hamesh Koreib was quiet after the withdrawal of SPLA troops, no doubt because Isaias wanted calm there. However, Isaias remained cautious in his approach to the relationship. Kiir urged him to cooperate on both Darfur and eastern Sudan, so that peace agreements would restrain the NCP majority in the government.

HUME